

Hello,

My name is Niccie Jackel. I am not going to stand up and give you numbers and statistics. I can't quote to you prices and studies. I can however tell you about the FRC (The Family Resource Center) from a parents perspective. Before we begin I should explain that I grew up in Indiana and that most of my family is still there. My husbands family is small and most of them are also not local. Why should you know this? Well, I have 4 children. I don't know how many of you have children, but experience makes me expect that very few of you have 4 or more children. So let me explain what that means. I cannot pick up the phone and call my dad and ask him to take the kids, I can't ask a grandma to pick up my oldest from basketball while I take my youngest to a dental appointment. I often have to be in 4 places at once while my husband is at work. Every day I wake up and I have 4 children, (all 10 and under) who need me. 4 children who need me to teach them, to help them, to love them, to protect them and to referee their fights. It is an absolutely amazing life, but like a 1 year old crying at their birthday party because they are just overwhelmed by all the good in their lap, I'm often overwhelmed. I worry that I'm not doing enough, that I'm missing stuff, that I'm screwing up in some epic way. From talking to many other parents, most of whom I have met through the FRC or school system, I have come to realize this is a very normal feeling. MOST parents feel this way.

The FRC came into my life when my oldest was 4. His teacher was so kind and fun and he BLOOMED under her teachings. He is a very smart kid and with a group of kids all at his age level he was able to do even more than I ever could at home. He also had a lot of issues. Thanks to the FRC I was able to reach out to his dr and with his dr and teachers we were able to figure out my son has ADHD and Anxiety and DMDD. Before the FRC teacher, I was afraid to ask if what he was doing was normal. I just simply thought I was an overwhelmed or a bad mother. His teacher helped us so much. Thanks to that early intervention my son was stable and able to do very well by the time he entered kindergarten.

My second son was slow to talk, he had birth to 3 working with him. When he was about to turn 3 he entered into Patty's program. I can clearly remember crying the day he got off the bus and called me Mommy for the first time. Before Amy it was always Mmmmmmm. I can remember the exact moment he said it and I called the school and asked for Amy. I was worried that I would be interrupting, but she CHEERED with me about it. By the time he entered kindergarten his speech was almost completely on track to where it should be. The FRC CHEERED him on with me and made that happen.

My 3<sup>rd</sup> son was desperate to go to school. He wanted to be a big kid like his brothers. The pride going to school and learning like a big kid, was amazing. He grew in so many ways I simply cannot list them all. And now, My daughter has started school and she at just barely 3 can already write her name and has come out of her shell. She was a shy kid who had issues being away from me and now she's a social butterfly. When she broke her arm recently before we even got back to school Patty and her teachers knew about what had happened. They ALL go above and beyond to care for our kids. EVERY SINGLE KID IN THIS PROGRAM is one of THEIR kids too. As a person who has no family out here, I cannot tell you what that means to my husband, myself and our children.

What I'm trying to show you in all of my rambling is that it's not about what they are teaching our kids academically, it's not about what testing results are showing, although that is important too.....the difference this program and these people make.....ITS HUGE. I could list family after family that they are involved with helping, that they have gone above and beyond for. This program has become a keystone for our community. Without it our society would suffer greatly. The early intervention, the parenting programs, the parents as teachers programs, the book drives, the backpack drives, the food programs, the contact information for when a family needs help, and just the community of parents it

has linked up is NEEDED. Our story is not uncommon. A LOT of parents don't have family nearby. A LOT of parents are NOT as lucky as we have been, to be able to have a stay at home parent or even both parents, and this program HELPS in ways you can't even imagine. The people I have met from this program have become more than friends and fellow parents. They have become our family. When I'm stuck and need help I can turn to them. When I'm overwhelmed I know I have a place to turn to for help. PARENTS NEED THIS.

I can remember when my son had a breakdown due to a bad med change when he was in the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade. It was awful. He was manic and went running through the school. He ended up running to the FRC hallway and ended up holed up in Patty's office. When I got there, the school and the FRC came together and thanks to them we were able to get him the help he needed. NOT ONCE did I feel like I was a bother or my son was a freak or a problem. Instead I felt like I had a team. I had people that were going to help me figure out what we needed to do to get him back on track. My story is NOT an isolated incident. The FRC deals with SO MANY children that have social or behavioral issues. They have never shied away from going above and beyond. Those kids especially NEED a team in their corner! A group of people who understand the system and who can help point the very overwhelmed parents in the right direction to get their kids the help they need.

The FRC means so much to me and to MANY, MANY, MANY other families. Even more importantly it means so much to our children. Thanks to the different programs and the interventions and such it makes a difference. Our kids, ALL of our kids, become smarter, kinder, better adjusted, happier, and just better kids in general because of this program. I BEG you all to please consider that before you vote to cut funding or put them into block funding. Everyone has always heard the saying, "it takes a village", but in today's society the standard village isn't there anymore. The FRC and school system IS our village. Please understand that before you vote. Please don't take that village away from us parents. We cannot raise our children with just one or two of us fighting for them. Please don't make severe cuts or take this program from our children. Please don't take this program away from our future. Without it you WILL see a change in the kids that come up in the school systems. Kids entering kindergarten with fewer social skills, less academic skills and more issues from parents that can't handle doing this alone. Our kids deserve to have this. Our future NEEDS it.

I appreciate your listening to me today. I hope that I have helped to give you some small glimpse of what the FRC means to my family and our community and our children. What the teachers and aides do on a daily basis is amazing. There are VERY few people in this world that can make a difference like they do for SO little recognition, thanks and money. The impact this program has is so much bigger than I can articulate and I hope that before you vote you realize that our children need this more than we need a lot of the other programs the state currently has. The repercussions of this program are far reaching and it is changing lives for the better. We NEED this. PLEASE don't take our village away from our families. They do so much on SO little already and cuts will MASSIVELY effect the impact they have. DON'T LET THIS HAPPEN! Our community is counting on you. Please vote no to the cuts and do adding them into a block grant. Vote to maintain their own line item funding and SHOW the state and the country that Connecticut puts our kids first. That Connecticut cares about our families and our future. YOU are the ones that can keep this village together.

Niccie Jackel

A mom of 4 forever indebted to the FRC program for all they do and have given to my children.